3 › 4 › 50 VERMONT

TIP SHEET

Early Childhood

EASY STEPS TO A HEALTHIER CHILD CARE SETTING

More than two-thirds of Vermont children under the age of 6 will spend time in a child care program. This is a perfect place to help children build healthy nutrition and physical activity habits that they will carry on to elementary school and beyond.

KEY STRATEGIES FOR CHILD CARE SETTINGS

1. **Ensure any food served meets USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program nutrition guidelines**
   - Encourage parents to bring healthy items for celebrations rather than sweets.
2. **Eliminate sugary drinks and provide drinking water all day**
   - Provide whole milk to children 12-24 months old who are not on breastmilk or formula.
   - Children 24 months should be served skim or 1% milk.
3. **Create a supportive environment for breastfed infants**
   - Offer mothers a comfortable, private area for nursing and pumping.
4. **Provide opportunities for daily physical activity**
   - Toddlers should have at least one hour of physical activity per day and preschoolers at least two hours.
   - Active play should not be withheld from children as a disciplinary tool.
5. **Limit screen time**
   - For children 2 or older, no more than 30 minutes of screen time per week for educational purposes.
   - No screen time for children under the age of 2.

AN EARLY START IS KEY

Meeting nutritional and physical activity standards is critical to development as the first three years of life are the period of most rapid brain and body growth. Modeling and helping children build a foundation of healthy habits increases the likelihood they will continue those practices as they grow up.

By limiting screen time, children have more time for healthy activities:

- Physical activity
- Social time with peers
- Better quality sleep by avoiding overstimulation

"In just four days, the children were happier and there were fewer behavior problems!"

MORE RESOURCES

Visit healthvermont.gov/3-4-50.